



# Blue Bells of Scotland

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## **Blue Bells of Scotland** Laura Vosika

Shawn has a skyrocketing musical career, fans, fame, money, his beautiful girlfriend Amy, and all the women he wants. Everything changes: Amy has enough and leaves him stranded in a Scottish castle tower overnight. He wakes up in medieval Scotland. Mistaken for the castle's future laird, he is forced to make a dangerous cross-country trek with a beautiful woman wielding a knife, pursued by English soldiers and a Scottish traitor, to raise men for the critical battle at Bannockburn.

Niall Campbell, Shawn's opposite in everything except looks, is no more happy to find himself caught in Shawn's life, pursued by women, the target of an angry girlfriend, expected to play a sell-out concert, and hearing the account of his own death and Scotland's annihilation at Bannockburn. He vows to figure out what went wrong at the battle, and find a way back to change it.

Blue Bells of Scotland is both an action-packed adventure and a tale of redemption that will be remembered long after the last page has been turned.

## **Blue Bells of Scotland Details**

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Author : Laura Vosika

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# From Reader Review *Blue Bells of Scotland* for online ebook

## Ambre says

An obvious "tribute" to the other popular time travel authors, with a few minor twists.

I give it 3 for being fun to read. I subtracted 1 for major historical inaccuracy (clan tartans in 1300s? Really, you have to research EVERYTHING) and failure to discuss her historical research or variance from known fact. So as a pure fiction it gets a 3 (I thought the ending was confused and nonsensical) but as a historical fiction it gets a 2 for flubbing that major point, and underemphasizing the differences between the English language then and now (speaking English in the 14th century would not make one even remotely understandable today, even grammar was different in middle English).

I am not sure why so many people misuse tartans in these books. Maybe they just assume it is an ancient practice, or maybe they think the book won't be "Scottish" without it and since there is no proof it WASN'T used then, they will let it slide. But then, it isn't history, is it? It's just guessing. Anyway, anyone seeking to write a Scottish historical novel had best do some research on tartans first!

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## Joan Szechtman says

In *Blue Bells of Scotland*, Laura Vosika spins a captivating tale that combines historical fiction with time travel and a bit of reverse alternate history cleverly woven in. Instead of changing the final outcome of an important historical event, Vosika changes the history at the start of the novel so that her time traveler changes it to what actually is. Although the grandfather paradox is mentioned, no consequences are shown for the changed history that the time travel generated such as people disappearing as if they never existed. The pacing flows from a measured cadence at the start of the tale and builds to a climatic crescendo reminiscent of Ravel's *Bolero*.

Just before the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn, the two main characters, Shawn Kleiner, a twenty-first century classical trombonist who has rock-star fame, switches places with Niall Campbell, a fourteenth century lord, soldier, and harpist. Niall and Shawn are effectively clones, and so are seen by their peers to be the persons they were expected to be. One thing that often bothers me in time travel tales is how the time traveler is able to understand radically different versions of the same language. For example, in addition to Gaelic, Niall knew Middle English, which is not readily intelligible to Modern English speakers. Here is a sample from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*:

*Heere bigynneth The Knyghtes Tale*

WHILOM, as olde stories tellen us,  
Ther was a duc that highte Theseus;

Visually, this may be more understandable for us than if we heard it, because of the way pronunciations changed. In *Monty Python and The Holy Grail*, knight was pronounced ki-nig-it. This is probably the way knight was said then as one of the members of Monty Python, Terry Jones, is a medievalist. Vosika shows how Niall works through the language change in a believable way.

Vosika created a plausible background for both characters that allowed them to function—albeit awkwardly—in the other's time. I was able to suspend my disbelief that these two men had these skills and were physically identical to each other. I particularly liked Shawn's transformation from an arrogant womanizer who only thinks about himself and what people can do for him, to an unpretentious loyal friend—a man ready to lay down his life for a cause he believes in.

Perhaps the most important aspect of a story to me is that I become invested in the characters. *Blue Bells* does not disappoint. Both Shawn and Niall are fully fleshed and I could imagine having a conversation with each. In addition to the two main characters, I feel I got to know and cared for Amy, Shawn's lover. One negative in my mind is the author sprang a significant revelation about Amy where I did not see the behavior as consistent with her character. My apologies for being vague, but I do not want to introduce spoilers. One character that I would have liked to have known better was Allene, a feisty, self-sufficient medieval noblewoman and Niall's betrothed. I look forward to learning more about her in the second book.

Of some minor concern was that I thought the prose could have been tighter and I found a few typos. I soon forgot these as I became absorbed by the story. This is one book that I found hard to put down.

Even though this is only the first book, I found the ending sufficiently satisfying, giving me the patience to wait for the second of the trilogy. That said; write faster, Laura. I want to read more.

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## Abby says

You know how "polite" people will sometimes couch criticism by closing their statement with "Bless their hearts"? Well, bless her heart, Laura Vosika tried real hard with *BLUE BELLS OF SCOTLAND*. She really did try and while some moments were truly outstanding, much of the book was a hot, angry, confused mess.

Brief plot summary: arrogant yet incredibly talented trombonist Shawn Kleiner and his orchestra are touring Scotland; while back in 1314, Niall Campbell, future Laird of Glemmirril, is preparing for a journey across the highlands to help raise an army against King Edward of England. Back to the future: after a rousing fight, Shawn's girlfriend Amy abandons him at the top of Glenmirril castle where he spends the night and wakes up in 1314, having traded places with Niall Campbell.

The rest of the story switches back and forth between times as we follow each man on their journey of self-discovery and eventual understanding that they've gone backwards/forwards in time. At first, Niall thinks he's been kidnapped and it's an elaborate English ruse, while Shawn thinks he's stuck in an historic re-enactors camp.

I loathed the main (contemporary) protagonist, Shawn. I haven't felt this much animosity towards a fictional character since Quoye from *THE SHIPPING NEWS*. I disliked Quoye because he was a dense, dumb push-over where as Shawn is the polar opposite. Arrogant, narcissistic, childish, petty and vain, it's impossible to see what his girlfriend Amy sees in him. He cheats on her non-stop, lies to her face and yet she hangs on. I found their relationship hard to believe because Vosika only ever showed the bad side of Shawn. We're told Amy sees a different side of him, the potential he could have, but as the reader, I didn't start to see any growth or development in Shawn until it was too late.

I was ambivalent about Niall. He's your standard romance hero: cocky but charming, and far too sure of himself. His personal journey seemed weaker than Shawn's, perhaps because he didn't have as far to go in

terms of self-improvement. It also didn't feel genuine when it was Niall making up for all the cruelties Shawn imposed on his orchestra mates, bed partners and girlfriend Amy. The apologies aren't Niall's responsibility and it felt like I, along with the rest of the characters, were STILL being lied to.

I will admit that the ending had a surprising twist and I'm curious to see where Vosika takes the sequel. Without revealing too much of what happens, Niall and Shawn meet and I'm thinking the next book will explore the relationship of the two men after they've each walked in the other's shoes.

I had a hard time getting this from a local library so I purchased it as an e-book. No issues with the e-book version, though I'm learning I do miss seeing the covers in color. But not to the extent that I'd switch from my Kindle to a Nook or an iPad. Those LCD screen are murder on my eyes! :)

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### **Julia says**

I thought I would enjoy this book as it has two of my favorite things - time travel and Scotland. It just didn't work for me. The character of Shawn was so annoying. He had no redeeming qualities and it was not at all convincing that Amy would stay with him with the way he treated her. Niall's character was the exact opposite, all honor and selflessness. He was a Mr Perfect and the fact that they were so completely opposite just made the whole scenario even more unbelievable. I wasn't convinced that they would fit into the other one's time without people being more suspicious it wasn't them. The ending didn't work for me either. Very disappointing.

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### **Kat Yares says**

What if you could swap your life with someone in years long past? It's one of those questions I ask myself a lot. This book explores the possibilities of time travel and changing personalities.

Shawn Kleiner has it all, including a shallow, self serving personality to boot. Niall Campbell is Shawn's twin from the past - everything that makes a man a man - the complete opposite of Shawn. When circumstances cause them to trade places in time and history - we see one man remain loyal to himself and one man change dramatically.

This book puts you right there, next to both men. Whether at the symphony or in battle, Ms. Vosika spins the web so well you are a part of all the action. If you love history, if you love romance, if you love music and if you like the believable unbelievable...this book is for you. I started it and couldn't put it down until I closed the cover on an ending I never expected.

Three cheers for Blue Bells of Scotland. Cannot wait to read the next volume of this trilogy.

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### **Micki says**

the slowest book on the planet!!!

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## **Terry (Ter05 TwiMoms/ MundieMoms) says**

[Update 4/22/18 This ended up a five book series and one of my favorites EVER. Right up there with Outlander and The All Souls Trilogy! It did not start off as great as those did but it ended up on the same level for me! The hero was not one to fall in love with and his growth as a man developed through his long and amazing story as well as the stories of some other characters I will never forget. Three reads for this book for me and in a few months I will re-read the entire series again...]

[ Update. I first read this book in 2010. I recently realized there were two more books out and bought them both. I read the second one without doing a re-read of this one - mistake but I just could not put it down to go back. But when I did finish, I decided to re-read Blue Bells of Scotland before I continued to the third book. I think I loved it even more than I did the first time! Highly recommend this series if you love Scotland, history, romance, and time travel. And no, it is nothing like Outlander - which I also love) My original review below:

I have revised my rating on this book from four stars to five. Why? Because a month after I read it I am still thinking about it. That does not happen often and is worth an extra star! The first was kind of slow for me. After reading it, I realize why I wasn't crazy about the beginning, and why it was necessary. There are two main characters, Shawn and Niall. Shawn is a self centered jerk and getting to know him early in the book was very irritating. He is a famous musician in the present time and cares only for himself. Niall is a natural leader and honorable man - in the 13th century. Shawn and Niall look exactly alike, and one night in the tower of a castle in Scotland, somehow they are switched in time. Once they realize what has happened they do not dare to let those around them know they are not who everyone thinks they are. A head injury gives them each an excuse to not quite "be himself". Shawn soon realizes that if he reveals himself he probably would burn as a witch. Niall decides telling the truth would probably end up with him in a straight jacket.

How they cope and what this experience does to them turns into a fascinating and thought provoking story. Shawn has a long time relationship with Amy in the present time where he has treated her badly. Niall is engaged to Allene in his own time, and they are part of a dangerous plan to bring more clans to fight with Robert the Bruce against King Edward of England. The story of how these two men deal with their feelings for the woman they love in "their time" and how they deal with the woman with them in the time they find themselves in is great reading. Shawn's coming to terms with who is is and who he has been is beautifully done. There are twists and turns in the end as Niall tries desperately to get back to his time and to change history, preventing his countrymen from being slaughtered is so well written I couldn't put it down until I finished. I had forgotten this is book #1 of a trilogy, and at the end I was very glad of that!

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## **Ben Anderson says**

I was lucky enough to get an advance copy. The writing is solid, characters come to life and you find yourself right there with them-- as Niall struggles to understand what's going on, as Shawn waits in the cellar, fighting off rats, as Allene and Shawn crawl through the woods with the English soldiers beating the brush behind them. I especially liked the fair day scene, moreso after I went to the Blue Bells Trilogy site ([www.bluebellstrilogy.com](http://www.bluebellstrilogy.com)) and listened to the music Shawn was playing.

Being a history buff, I appreciated the research and historical detail that went into this work.

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### **Loretta says**

This is a cracking book. There are some anachronisms, but the writing just picks you up and carries you away. I got lost in the story. Definitely worth a read. I'll be buying the rest in the series and saving them to read on my holiday. Except for book 2 which I'm allowing myself to read now.

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### **Dianne Wilensky says**

This is book 1 of a trilogy (Scottish history, romance, time travel). Book 2 is "The Minstral Boy" and there is a 3rd book on the way that I want to read as soon as it is published.

I'm not good at explaining why I liked a book so I'll borrow a review from Amazon.com.

"What if you could swap your life with someone in years long past? It's one of those questions I ask myself a lot. This book explores the possibilities of time travel and changing personalities.

Shawn Kleiner has it all, including a shallow, self serving personality to boot. Niall Campbell is Shawn's twin from the past - everything that makes a man a man - the complete opposite of Shawn. When circumstances cause them to trade places in time and history - we see one man remain loyal to himself and one man change dramatically.

This book puts you right there, next to both men. Whether at the symphony or in battle, Ms. Vosika spins the web so well you are a part of all the action. If you love history, if you love romance, if you love music and if you like the believable unbelievable...this book is for you. I started it and couldn't put it down until I closed the cover on an ending I never expected."

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### **Sandy says**

A time-travel romance set in in Inverness...hmmm...what could that have possibly be inspired by? If you're looking for something like "Outlander" this is not it. I'm sorry I blew \$2.00 on the Kindle version. I put it down after the opening two pages describing Shawn's seducing the engaged-to-someone-else receptionist by picking a rose from the vase on her desk and dragging it across her cheek. And then becoming the rock-star trombone player savior of the classical orchestra. Yes, this was the first two pages. I picked it up again a couple days later out of curiosity and read about another 100 pages and then gave up completely. His girlfriend was such a dope. Niall's story wasn't as irritating, because he wasn't the loathsome caricature that Shawn was.

From other reviews, it looks like the story picks up, but slogging through a few hundred more pages isn't worth it when there are so many less horrible books out there to read.

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## **Kristen says**

I was somewhat apprehensive when starting this book, thinking that it might be like any other book I've read involving time travel and historical events (specifically those that took place in Scotland). I was fortunate enough to have won an advance copy of the book, so I gave the book a full chance, and I was very pleasantly surprised.

Pretty soon after starting the book, I found myself not wanting to put the book down, curious about what would be happening next, where the story was going to go, and how things would turn out in the end.

Writing a review isn't something I often do with a book, since I much prefer reading to writing, but I felt this book deserved one. It was well worth the read, the scenery and descriptions of events were very well done, and I found myself still thinking about the characters and events after having finished the book. I honestly can't wait for the next book in the trilogy.

I know a number of my friends would love this book, so I'm hoping they'll give it a chance, too.

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## **Dorsi says**

Loved it! Original & intelligently written. Towards the end, I could not turn the pages fast enough to find out what happened. The end was definitely not what I expected. I can't wait until the next in the series comes out! I will be the first in line to get it. Thanks Laura Vosika for sharing your engaging story. Keep tapping those keys on the keyboard...carry on!

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## **Pamelabyoung says**

Time travel, music and Inverness....my faves!

Gotta say, though, I really hate to get to the end of a book and find out it is the first of a series or a trilogy. Don't get me wrong, I love trilogies and series. I just prefer to know from the outset that I am at the beginning of a longer journey. Frankly, I hate being left hanging and would rather wait to buy a book until the entire trilogy is available so I can read them in quick succession. On the other hand, I can't really understand the whole current obsession of writing a book with a goal of a sequel. Doesn't anyone have the goal of writing a book that will stand alone anymore?

That said, I am waiting patiently for the second in the series which, I am told, is to be out in September. Then I suppose we will have to wait for the third book. Still, time travel, music and Inverness? I'll be there waiting.

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## **J.R. Tomlin says**

This novel starts a trilogy story surrounding two identical men in Scotland who are separated by 700 years.

I was a bit nervous in starting this novel because most novels, including some very popular ones, thoroughly



muck up Scottish history. I hate that, particularly when it involves events as important as the Battle of Bannockburn. However, although I would nitpick the history somewhat, Vosika stuck close enough to the history that even I wasn't too bothered. Mind you, don't read it for history because there are some questionable events, but it's close enough for time-travel.

The main characters are Shawn, living in current times and a celebrated, self-centered trombonist touring Scotland with a concert orchestra and Niall, from the 1314, recovering from a wound and preparing to set off for battle at Bannockburn against an overwhelming English army. Although the two men are identical in appearance, except for Niall's scars and wound, they are totally unlike in character.

I thought it was interesting that the time travel was a switch. It wasn't explained how this happened, but I was involved enough in the characters to suspend disbelief.

Niall quickly figures out what happened but Shawn takes quite a while to figure out that he is no longer in the time in which he fell asleep.

I very much appreciated that the author gave a good background for how each man would manage to function in such a different environment, something many time-travel authors don't bother with. For example, the fact that Shawn is fluent in Gaelic from his childhood made his functioning in medieval Scotland where Scots Gaelic was spoken much more believable.

The characterisation in this was very strong and the descriptive narrative well done. I can recommend it to people who enjoy time-travel novels and to people who enjoy Scottish novels with no worry that it insults Scottish history, as so many novels and movies do.

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